

Wycombe away again in Trophy

IT'S another away draw for Wycombe Wanderers in the FA Trophy. They must make the long journey up North on February 5 to the winners of the postponed first round tie between South Liverpool and Runcorn (writes Stuart Earp).

Wycombe can count themselves unlucky not to receive a home draw. This is the fourth successive time since they entered the trophy that they have been drawn away.

In previous seasons they lost at Ilford and Slough while on Saturday they overcame Barnet 1-0 at Underhill — their first success in the Trophy. Monday's second round draw suggests they will have to be at their very best to get through.

South Liverpool and Runcorn meet tonight (Tuesday) weather permitting and all the signs point to a Runcorn victory. They have beaten South Liverpool twice in the

Northern Premier League this season, 4-0 away and 2-0 at home, while Runcorn are vastly experienced in this competition.

They reached the semi-finals last season beating such teams as Bedford and Slough before falling to Stafford Rangers in the last four. In the two leg semi-final they lost 1-0 at Stafford and drew the home game 0-0.

Both Runcorn and South Liverpool play in the Northern Premier League which is regarded as the strongest outside the Football League. Runcorn, in fact, are the current champions and although they have slipped a little this season, they are still a force to be reckoned with.

They occupy eighth place in the table at the moment but have one notable away victory under their belts recently. They won 3-1 at Northwich Victoria who have been making a name for themselves by reaching the fourth round of the FA Cup beating professionals Rochdale, Peterborough and Watford on the way.

South Liverpool have enjoyed no such luck. They finished well down in the league last season and had to apply for re-election. At present they are third from bottom with a record that reads: P23 W6 D3 L14 F28 A56 Pts15. Their biggest reverse was an 8-0 home thrashing by Bangor City.

That reverse was only three weeks ago and with those two league defeats against Runcorn in mind, they are rank underdogs for the game tomorrow.

Runcorn are currently eighth from top in the Northern Premier with a playing record of P26, W9, D8, L9, F34, A24, Pts26.

Wycombe can take some heart from the fact that one team from the south has won at Runcorn this season. Wimbledon met Runcorn in a match to decide the non-league champions in a special North v South champion of champions match earlier in the season. Wimbledon lost at home 1-0 but clinched the second leg 3-1 at Runcorn for a 3-2 aggregate victory.

The facts point to a tough game in more ways than one for Wanderers. Runcorn have a rather unsavoury disciplinary record this season and no fewer than five of their players have been sent off in various com-

petitions.

Last season the dismissal of one of their players — Trevor Finnegan — could have cost them a place at Wembley. Finnegan received his marching orders in the semi-final against Stafford when Runcorn had to overcome a 1-0 deficit from the first leg. Finnegan was their leading goalscorer last year with 43 goals.

Runcorn, about 180 miles from High Wycombe and some 12 miles from Liverpool, have won the Cheshire Senior Cup twice in the last three years and include in their side several former professionals. Alan King played over 300 games for Tranmere while centre half Peter Duff is a former Manchester City player.

Ex-Oldham Athletic forward Barry Howard has been doing most of the goalscoring with Finnegan this season. Runcorn average about 700 for home league games but 6,000 watched their Trophy semi-final against Stafford last season.

Local rivals Slough Town have been more fortunate. They meet Minchend from the Southern League at home while Wycombe's fellow Isthmians Walthamstow are at home to Scarborough, last year's Trophy winners.